

Arguments Abound Over Olympic Park And Ride For Soldier Hollow Venue

Kirsten Shaw

Courier Staff

SLOC officials have been covered in scandal excrement lately, and now they want Wasatch County to hand some over for Olympic use.

For more than a year, Olympic officials have searched for an appropriate site for a park and ride lot near Soldier Hollow, the cross-country and biathlon venue located in Wasatch Mountain State Park. On August 4, the Wasatch County Commission received formal notice the Salt Lake Organizing Committee (SLOC) wants the location to be the sewer farm south fields at 2400 South.

While negotiations continue, the letter strongly urges commissioners "get behind this decision just as we accepted the community's property and the State Park proposal that we move forward with our tasks." SLOC's Director of Transportation Planning, Andrew Gemperline detailed reasons why the site was chosen over alternatives, including safe right turns to the site from U.S. 189, increased capacity and less costly preparation.

The letter also reminds "after extensive discussion... commission representatives indicated that they would accept the outcome" of evaluations. SLOC is eager to "reach closure on our basic transportation plan", but will meet with county officials in future public forums to discuss concerns. Prior to receipt of this letter, officials had hefty concerns and drafted their own letter, which was

sent to SLOC August 11.

"We'd been putting pressure on SLOC to tell us exactly where the park and ride will be," said Sheriff's Deputy Ken Van Wagoner, who wrote the letter. "We prioritized roads we thought need some attention... and (roads) we thought needed to be looked at for safety... must they address some of these intersections. This information will allow us to go forward with our security plan."

Commissioner Mike Kohler, Heber Mayor Lynn Adams, Midway Mayor Gene Owens, Charleston Mayor, Sheriff Mike Spanos and Chief of Police Ed Rhodes signed the document. Concerns for safety, success and the least amount of negative impact on the community are paramount in the letter. Roads and intersections of highest priority are the junction of SR 40, SR 189, and the Daniel's intersection; Tate lane and SR 113, 2400 South at SR 113 through SR 189, South Field Road at SR 189, and SR 113 at SR 189, among others.

Officials on both sides vehemently point out the decision is not final. SLOC expects 25,200 patrons at Soldier Hollow in 2002. Some 797 autos will travel north on US 189 during peak hours, with 2,391 headed from other directions on US 40 and 189. Currently, daily traffic on US 189 averages 6,000 in various sections, according to the venue transportation plan. Rhodes, who believes officials have "done enough study on it to know what they're doing" said his greatest concern is the Main Street and SR 189 intersection, affected

by 85 percent of visitors. He said current SLOC plans will not handle traffic and could cause bottlenecks at many intersections.

"SLOC promised to rebuild roads damaged, but we're not sure it will be satisfactory."

Bob Mathis

Wasatch County Olympic Coordinator

He asserts some Utah Department of Transportation proposals have accommodated spectator traffic, but not local residents. Rhodes hopes the decision will prompt funding to repair areas and intersections that desperately need it, and added the overall effect would be the same regardless of the park and ride location. Utah Congressman Merrill Cook announced last spring that the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee earmarked \$82.4 million for Utah Olympic projects-2, 400,000 goes to Soldier Hollow road improvement. In 1999, the U.S. government awarded \$2.613 million in transportation grants for 2000 Soldier Hollow roads. SLOC and UDOT's Bob Perry assured, "we aren't going to do anything permanent" to the fields, which are used during warm months for sewage treatment. He said SLOC is encouraging carpooling, and buses will be stored at

night at a permanent site north of Heber. UDOT advanced funds for construction and safety improvements. Perry hopes the final decision is "a consensus" by all parties.

"We're willing to work with them on it, but we need to be left whole," said Scott Wright, Wasatch Special Service District Superintendent, who oversees sewer field use and requires the site can be put back in production by April of 2003 to treat waste water. He said this is a condition for Olympic use according to a signed 1999 memorandum.

Wasatch County Olympic Coordinator Bob Mathis is satisfied with the proposed site, although he said negotiations are still underway. His concern?

That 2400 South is adequate and that field surface technology is satisfactory to the district. After numerous tests, a geotextile product and sand will be used to cover the lot, which Mathis said doesn't destroy the fields.

"The County's position is 2400 South needs to be improved. At the Y intersection, there is a 15 car wait, and we aren't even at the Olympics," said Mathis, who wants capacity enhancements and surface improvements. "SLOC promised to rebuild roads damaged, but we're not sure it will be satisfactory."

He said Perry wouldn't make empty promises, but is concerned taxpayers would carry the burden. "At least it's not a moving target anymore," Mathis added. **W**



EDITORIAL

Where Is The Justice?

We followed the murder trial of Kamas resident Lorin Leavitt with interest. The child he killed, 22-month-old Wyatt Radmall, was one of our own. His mother and grandmother live and work in Midway. Leavitt was tried for first-degree murder, but was convicted of third-degree felony child-abuse homicide.

What does that mean? Third-degree felony child-abuse homicide. It's a mouthful.

Does it mean that death resulting from child-abuse isn't as bad as a death that is labeled "first-degree?"

Leavitt was sentenced this week to 0-5 years in jail. He killed a 22-month-old child. He first told jurors that Wyatt fell off the sofa in the living room while he was sleeping. Most of us have known children who have taken longer, harder falls than that, but have lived to tell the tale.

Leavitt's story changed when faced by prosecutors. Maybe he "accidentally" knocked Wyatt's head into a wall, a wall that had a hole that had hairs from Wyatt's head stuck in the cracks.

Why do we talk about this? This isn't "sensationalistic" journalism. We're talking about it because we're mad about it. Sick about it. Because we think it is a sad reflection on our community when this kind of a crime goes so glaringly unpunished.

Our children should be protected in this community by the laws and the courts. This sentence of 0-5 years does not reflect protection. Leavitt had a his-

him, which he violated, because of domestic violence. There is a pattern in Leavitt's life. He is obviously a violent person.

Leavitt did receive the maximum allowable sentence for his conviction. According to a report this week in the (ital) Salt Lake Tribune (end ital) the judge said he would "send state prison authorities a staunchly worded letter urging them to keep Leavitt incarcerated for five full years."

Is five years enough?

Leavitt's lawyer asked the court for mercy. He said that Leavitt should only receive probation, because Leavitt has a job and so he is a contributing member of society. He has children of his own from a previous marriage, so his attorney suggested that they will suffer if he goes to prison.

Society suffers when people like Lorin Leavitt are not held accountable for their crimes.

He should have received counselling years ago. Someone in the court system could have ordered him into counselling for his previous crimes, but it never happened. That in and of itself is a tragedy.

What can we do? Make noise about it. Write letters about it. Tell your newspapers, your elected officials, local attorneys, that 0-5 years is not long enough to punish a "child-abuse homicide."

We failed Wyatt Radmall because he was not protected in life, and because his death was not suitably punished. He was



subscribe...

WASATCH COUNTY COURIER

Wasatch County's Source for News



Sub-scribe (sub skrib), v., -scribed, -scrib-ing.

—2. to append one's signature or mark to (a document), as in approval or attestation of its contents.

—Random House Webster's dictionary